



# Shorelines

Vol. 14, Issue 8, August 2007

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On August 8, 2007, Salisbury will celebrate its 275th anniversary. The origins of Salisbury began on that date in 1732 when the petition to the Maryland legislature by several inhabitants to establish a town at the head of the Wicomico River called Salisbury Town was passed.

There was a landing at the head of the Wicomico where the river forked designated in the act as Carr's or Handy's Landing. Several histories of Salisbury have been published over the years; they include *Historic Salisbury Maryland* (1932) by Charles J. Truitt, *Salisbury and Wicomico County (A Pictorial History)* (1981) by John E. Jacob Jr. and *Salisbury in Times Gone By* (1991) by Richard W. Cooper. None of the histories of Salisbury delve into why the landing also bore the name Carr. Readers can see our December issue for a comprehensive story about the early history of Salisbury, including the identity of Mr. Carr and the location of Carr's or Handy's Landing.

John Caldwell (d. 1747) owned and operated a sawmill on the south prong of the Wicomico River which proves to be integral to Salisbury's history. Earlier attempts to establish a permanent town on the Wicomico River prior to Salisbury, such as Green Hill, proved futile, a practice all too common throughout the Chesapeake. The act called for John Caldwell, Ebenezer Handy, Thomas Gillis, Isaac Handy and John Disheroon to be appointed commissioners to purchase 15 acres of land to be taken out of the tract of land called Pemberton's Goodwill, surveyed in 1682 for John Winder (d. 1698) and then in the possession of his grandson William Winder (1715-1792). The town would be laid out into 20 lots at three-quarter acres each. Although the act called for a plat to be filed with the county clerk, no known plat survives today.

In its early years, Salisbury struggled as a town. When Worcester County was erected in 1742, there was no reference to Salisbury, only to Caldwell's sawmill. As late as 1763, very few lots had been taken up, and a petition was filed by 123 persons "for the purpose & better promoting the advantages of the town." Although the original 1732 plat does not

## Salisbury: Celebrating 275 Years



Salisbury Sentinel, August 10, 1860  
(Arthur Leonard Collection)

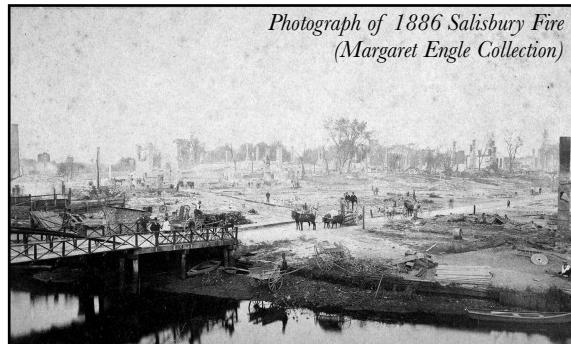
survive, a 1756 plat depicting Wicomico Manor does reveal some clues to early Salisbury.

There are two bridges in the town's vicinity. The first bridge represents the current bridge at South Division Street opposite Peninsula Regional Medical Center crossing over the south prong at the sawmill formerly operated by Caldwell then in the possession of his son-in-law William Venables. The second bridge represents the current bridge at Main Street crossing over the north prong; this may have been the bridge that Caldwell and several others petitioned the county court in 1740 to replace a private ferry operated by the said Caldwell. Toward the end of the Colonial period, John Nelms (d. 1787) owned and operated a store in

the town. The Nabb Center owns one of Nelms' original ledgers in its John Jacob Jr. Collection.

During the 19th century, Salisbury witnessed many changes. In 1817, the Maryland legislature passed an act to appoint commissioners to survey the layout of the town at that time. A plat and a description of each lot were filed in the Somerset County Deeds. The act also called for the realignment of Division Street though no agreement could be reached. In 1854, the city was incorporated. By 1860, the Eastern Shore Railroad extended the rail line down from Delmar into Salisbury. During the Civil War, Union troops were stationed at Camp Upton; the present site of *The Daily Times*. In 1867, Wicomico County was erected out of

Photograph of 1886 Salisbury Fire  
(Margaret Engle Collection)



# Salisbury

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## Closings!

The Nabb Research Center will be closed Monday,  
September 3, 2007, in observance of Labor Day.

## Reminder

Step Back in Time at Pemberton Hall  
Saturday, September 15, 2007, 4-7 p.m.  
Invitations are in the mail!

*"We're History...Without You"*

### Continued: Salisbury: Celebrating 275 Years

portions of Somerset and Worcester counties. For many years, Salisbury had been a "divided" town, much like its neighboring town of Delmar; now it became the seat of government for the new county.

Salisbury has been devastated by two fires, the first in 1860 and the second in 1886. The Nabb Center owns the only known copy of the *Salisbury Sentinel* which describes the 1860 fire and losses incurred. The 1888 Sanborn insurance map for Salisbury indicates a population of 3,900 with no paved streets, but the town had an opera house, five churches, W.A. Warrington & Co. Crate and Basket Factory and Planing Mill, E.E. Jackson & Co. Saw and Planing Mill and Lumber Yard, G.H. Toadvine Grist Mill and Planing Mill and Wool Carding, W.B. Miller & Co. Kindling Wood Factory, Mitchell & Merrill Salisbury Wood Working Factory and a host of other mills as well as businesses. Prior to 1909 when the dam burst at what had been William Venable's mill in 1756, a lake called Humphrey's Lake was in the landscape of Salisbury, covering a large area which now includes the Salisbury Zoo.

As the horse-and-buggy gave way to automated vehicles, the location of Salisbury proved vital to its continued growth. With the construction of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in Maryland and the

Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel in Virginia, travel onto the peninsula increased. The north-south (Route 13) and the east-west (Route 50) highways intersect at Salisbury; thus, Salisbury has become known as the "Crossroads of Delmarva." Currently, there are over 26,000 people living in the city of Salisbury with a metropolitan population of 70,000. There are two centers of higher education with Salisbury University and Wor-Wic Community College. It has been the home for the Delmarva Shorebirds, a Class-A affiliate of the Baltimore Orioles for over 10 years. It is also the headquarters for both Perdue Farms and Piedmont Airlines, both well-known, national corporations. In 1998, Barrie Parsons Tilghman became the first female mayor of Salisbury.

Nabb Center board member and volunteer Pat Taylor will be a presenter at the anniversary celebration 2 p.m. Saturday, August 11, at the Chamber of Commerce building in Salisbury sponsored by the Salisbury Jaycees. The staff at the Nabb Center adds its congratulations to the celebration.

*Contributors to this article include T. Aaron Horner, Pat Taylor, John Lyon, Jim Trader and Becky Miller*

In the July 22, 2007, article in *The Daily Times*, appears the phrase "Salisbury got its beginnings around Col. Isaac Handy's shipping business, which he began in 1665." Col. Isaac Handy, builder of Pemberton Hall, was not born until April 13, 1706. The Nabb Center scholars have determined that Charles J. Truitt misinterpreted the 1667 patent record for Salisbury Plain which is located on the Annemessex River and not on the Wicomico, as stated by Truitt.

### Correction

In the July 2007 *Shoreline*, the article "Mapping Vienna Using GIS" referred to the replica John Smith shallop by the name *Sultana*. The actual name of the shallop is unknown; it was built at the *Sultana* Shipyard in Chestertown, MD, by *Sultana Projects, Inc.* Thus the name of the organization was inadvertently attributed to the name of the shallop. We would like to thank Nabb member Emily Russell of Chestertown for informing us of our error.